

# THE CROWN AND THE ECONOMY UNDER ROGER II AND HIS SUCCESSORS

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## I

In his obituary notice of King Roger II, the south-Italian historian Romuald of Salerno described him as "very careful in acquiring money, but not too generous in spending it".<sup>1</sup> The treasury he had helped fill drew admiring attention from contemporaries. "Hugo Falcandus," writing in the late twelfth century, described how rioters broke into the royal palace at Palermo in 1161; they uncovered a seemingly bottomless store of wealth—jewels, rings, purple vestments, gold and silver.<sup>2</sup> And it is striking testimony to the fame of this treasure that, two years later, Frederick Barbarossa was promising a share in it to his Pisan allies, should a planned invasion of Sicily succeed.<sup>3</sup> When Barbarossa's son Henry actually captured Palermo in 1194, he seems to have taken from the treasury many of those silken robes which later became the coronation vestments of the Holy Roman Emperors.<sup>4</sup> This link between the Sicilian kings and treasure is further reflected in local folk legend. According to one group of tales, the abbey of Monreale was founded by King William the Good, at the instigation of the Virgin Mary, after she had revealed to him the whereabouts of a great hoard of gold.<sup>5</sup> It is, at least,

true that William the Good issued legislation on treasure trove.<sup>6</sup>

The wealth of the Norman kings was not simply a matter of legend. It was real. Its existence was intimately linked to that of an efficient, reasonably uniform machinery of government. Royal officials planted throughout the kingdom were expected to transmit funds to the royal fisc. The king himself decreed which taxes were to be imposed, from which taxes certain groups were to be exempt, and at what level these taxes should be fixed. There were lucrative taxes on trade and agricultural production, and both types of economic activity reached high levels by the mid-twelfth century. At this point several important questions emerge. Did the rulers of Sicily take an active interest in the economic life of their subjects, in order, perhaps, to maintain a high royal income? There are suggestive comments in the thirteenth-century records which indicate the motives of later kings in encouraging economic activity. In 1239, Frederick II explained to his officials why he was expressing such enormous interest in the production of crops—the answer lay in the subsequent taxation of what was grown and sold, "since heavy and urgent tasks make

<sup>1</sup> Romuald of Salerno, *Chronicon*, ed. C. A. Garufi, *Rerum italicarum scriptores*, ser. 2, VII, part 1 (Città di Castello, 1935), 237.

<sup>2</sup> Hugo Falcandus, *La Historia o Liber de Regno Sicilie e la Epistola ad Petrum Panormitanum Ecclesie Thesaurarium*, ed. G. B. Siragusa, *Fonti per la storia d'Italia* (Rome, 1897), 56.

<sup>3</sup> D. Abulafia, *The Two Italies: economic relations between the Norman Kingdom of Sicily and the northern communes* (Cambridge, 1977), 124.

<sup>4</sup> C. R. Brühl, "La politica finanziaria di Federico Barbarossa," in *Popolo e stato in Italia nell'età di Federico Barbarossa: Alessandria e la Lega Lombarda. Relazioni e comunicazioni al XXXIII Congresso storico subalpino* (Turin, 1970), 207; Hermann Fillitz, *Schatzkammer: the crown jewels and the ecclesiastical treasure chamber* (2nd ed., Vienna, 1963), nos. 163–65, pp. 168, 171; cf. nos. 167, 169, 170, 172.

<sup>5</sup> G. Pitre, *Fiabe, novelle e racconti popolari siciliani*, IV, Biblioteca delle tradizioni popolari siciliane, VII (Palermo, 1875), 35; D.

Abulafia, "The reputation of a Norman king in Angevin Naples," *Journal of Medieval History*, 5 (1979), 144, for other folktales also.

<sup>6</sup> *Liber Augustalis* of Frederick II, Lib. III, tit. 14 (xxxv); cf. Lib. III, tit. 69 (xciii). The following editions have been used here: *Constitutiones regni Siciliae 'Liber Augustalis' Neapel 1475*, Faksimiledruck mit einer Einleitung von Hermann Diltz (Glashütten/Taunus, 1973), reprinting Sixtus Riessinger's Neapolitan edition; *Constitutiones regum regni utriusque Siciliae mandante Friderico II Imperatore per Petrum de Vine Capuanum Praetorio Praefectum et Cancellarium . . . et Fragmentum quod superest Regesti eiusdem Imperatoris Ann. 1239 & 1240*, ed. Cajetanus Carcani (Naples, 1786) (hereafter referred to as: *Const. & Reg. Friderici*) (references to page numbers only are to the Register of 1239/40); also *Constitutiones regni utriusque Siciliae, Glossis ordinariis, Commentariisque excellentiss. I. V. D. Domini Andraeae de Isernia, ac Bartholomaei Capuani* (Lyons, 1568), with laws of the Angevin kings as well, and important glosses (hereafter referred to as *Andr. Isern.*).

money very necessary to our court.”<sup>7</sup> In the late thirteenth century another king of Sicily, Charles of Anjou, expressed his motives uncompromisingly enough: “If the port of Manfredonia, already begun, may be completed and perfected, in giving to merchants, to ships, and to merchandise a sure haven where they can wait out the dangers of the sea and winds, this would augment the taxes and returns of fiscal revenues.”<sup>8</sup> So it seems that, in the Angevin period, imaginative innovation was not simply promoted out of disinterested benevolence to the king’s subjects.

The statements of Frederick and Charles lead to the most difficult question of all: what were the effects of royal involvement in economic activities on those activities? Heavy taxation of trade and agriculture, to finance Frederick’s Lombard wars or Angevin championship of the Guelf cause, stimulated discontent and even rebellion in the thirteenth century. But as early as 1160 the citizens of Messina and Palermo were grumbling at the grinding taxation demanded of them—taxes which were levied on the very necessities of life, so that, paradoxically, the inhabitants of grain-rich Sicily found grain almost beyond their means.<sup>9</sup> At least in the short term, royal interest in economic activity might benefit the fisc, but that is not to say that it benefited the king’s subjects, or that it increased the prosperity of the kingdom and its capacity to maintain past levels of trade and of agricultural productivity.<sup>10</sup>

My first task in this paper must therefore be to see what forms royal intervention in the economy took: what taxes were actually levied, what rights were reserved to the crown, what encouragement was given to new settlers and to visiting merchants. To present an answer applicable to the twelfth century it is, however, necessary to adopt a long perspective. In the first place, so much attention has been concentrated on Frederick II’s economic policies, and so many statements have been made about

his originality (or lack of it) in conceiving those policies, that the thirteenth-century kings of Sicily have to provide one constant point of reference.<sup>11</sup> How old are the state monopolies on salt, iron, and other goods operated under Frederick II and the Angevins? Are the attitudes of Frederick and Charles, cited already, a reasonable indication of the Norman outlook too? It is essential at the outset to be aware of the very different pressures which existed in thirteenth-century Sicily, and guided royal intervention: Frederick and his successors did indeed empty their treasury to cover war costs; they raised loans from foreign bankers—something the Normans never seem to have done, nor have needed to do; they almost certainly kept a much closer watch than did the Normans on the economic activities of their subjects, operating a tighter, more uniform system of intervention, in order to maximize their income.

Another reason for adopting a long perspective is the problem of evidence, or rather of the lack of it. The twelfth-century evidence did exist, and was probably unrivaled in detail by any other western kingdom. There are tantalizing references in twelfth-century charters to the detailed land surveys kept in Palermo; there are reflections of these surveys in grants of land which record in minute detail the boundaries of estates. As early as 1161, during the riots in Palermo, many of these records were destroyed—quite deliberately. The land registers indicated ownership of serfs (hence the hostility to them) and they stated whether land was cultivated or uncultivated, agricultural land, pasture, or woodland.<sup>12</sup> The registers must have been of some importance in planning the vast immigration of north Italian settlers into the emptier parts of Sicily—a process to which I shall return in detail. But, without all this, recourse must be had to other types of evidence. There is the “negative” evidence of grants of land or rights out of the royal

<sup>7</sup> *Const. & Reg. Friderici*, 267.

<sup>8</sup> G. Yver, *Le commerce et les marchands dans l’Italie méridionale au XIII<sup>e</sup> et au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1903), 163; J. H. Pryor, “Foreign policy and economic policy: the Angevins of Sicily and the economic decline of southern Italy, 1266–1343,” in *Principalities, Powers and Estates: studies in medieval and early modern government and society*, ed. L. O. Frappell (Adelaide, 1980), 46–47—an important, challenging discussion.

<sup>9</sup> I. Peri, *Uomini, città e campagne in Sicilia dall’XI al XIII secolo* (Bari, 1978), 13–31, for the relative strengths and weaknesses of the cities.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Abulafia, *The Two Italies* (*supra*, note 3), for the argument that the north-Italian presence in the Regno was significant for the development of a “dual economy” in medieval Italy.

<sup>11</sup> For Frederick’s economic policies, see: J. M. Powell, “Medieval monarchy and trade: the economic policy of Emperor Frederick II of Sicily,” *StM*, ser. 3, 3 (1962), 420–524, and E. Maschke, “Die Wirtschaftspolitik Kaiser Friedrichs II. im Königreich Sizilien,” *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, LV (1966), 289–328.

<sup>12</sup> D. Clementi, “Notes on Norman Sicilian surveys,” in V. H. Galbraith, *The Making of Domesday Book* (Oxford, 1961), 55–58; for the circumstances of the destruction of these records in 1161, see F. Chalandon, *Histoire de la domination normande en Italie et en Sicile*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1907), II, 277.

<sup>13</sup> For the royal privileges of Roger II’s reign, see the “Regesten” of E. Caspar, in his *Roger II. (1101–1154) und die Gründung der normannisch-sicilischen Monarchie* (Innsbruck, 1904) (hereafter, Caspar, “Regesten”), and of H. Enzensberger, *Beiträge zum Kanzlei- und Urkundenwesen der normannischen Herrscher Unteritaliens und Siziliens* (Kallmünz, 1971).

demesne, made by the Norman kings to many ecclesiastical beneficiaries.<sup>13</sup> These grants, by revealing exemptions from standard taxes and obligations, also reveal precisely what those taxes and obligations might otherwise have been. Moreover, grants of crown demesne land or of a share in the revenue from certain taxes suggest, in a shadowy way, what income the king expected to gather from his own assets. Finally, this group of documents is of interest because the beneficiaries include several of the most spectacular churches in Sicily: the Palatine Chapel, the cathedral at Cefalù, San Giovanni degli Eremiti in Palermo. Their wealth and grandeur obviously enough reflect the wealth of the crown, or that small portion of it which was directed to spiritual investments.

Fortunately, a second major group of documents helps too. The thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries provide evidence of later attempts at intervention in economic activity, and sometimes hint at precedents. The unique register of Frederick II, of 1239–40; the fragments of his registers copied by later rulers of southern Italy; the legislation of the Hohenstaufen and Angevin rulers, some of which incorporates laws attributed to Roger II and William II—all these suggest elements of continuity, and at the very least they suggest how the Normans *may* have indulged in economic controls.<sup>14</sup> But the thirteenth century did see attempts to impose greater fiscal uniformity than the Norman records reveal; the later documents blur local distinctions and leave an impression of a more solid, more efficiently run structure than probably existed under Roger II—a managed, coherent system is visible by 1300.<sup>15</sup>

Posed differently, the problem is this. The regulated, reasonably standardized economic controls visible by the end of the thirteenth century have obvious analogies to what little is known of Norman attempts at economic control. But this does not mean that the Angevin kings inherited the whole concept of how and to what purpose the economic life of their subjects should be supervised, and that they did so from Norman Sicilian—rather than, say, Capetian French—precedents. A rough framework, some precise details, perhaps even an ideal system, can be identified in the charters and legislation of the Norman kings. But the historical evidence that survives from these early

kings produces a fragmentary impression; and it is difficult to decide whether this means that they operated an uneven policy or set of policies, or whether there were some consistent organizing ideas. Anyone who tries to present a complete picture of how Roger II viewed the economic activities of his subjects can only offer hints, speculations, and handfuls of later evidence which may be anachronistic. Moreover, it is difficult not to be drawn into the argument whether the origins of Norman government lay still further back in time, in Byzantine, Arab, and Lombard precedents. To say that Norman government had roots in all three is only to increase the suspicion that under Roger II economic controls were exercised in a wide variety of ways, determined as much by their antecedents in earlier practice as by the specific needs of the crown. I propose here to try to escape from this fierce battleground by concentrating on the actual rights, taxes, and incentives to economic activity which can be identified under the Normans, especially under Roger II; I propose to deal with antecedents only when they shed direct light on the manner in which the Norman crown exercised its rights.<sup>16</sup>

## II

Early in Roger II's career, in 1113, his mother Adelaide was lured to Jerusalem by King Baldwin I, who hoped that the resources of Sicily might provide invaluable help to his hard-won kingdom. Adelaide sailed east, to her brief career as Queen, in ships "loaded . . . with wheat, wine and oil, and salted meats, with arms too and horses of fine breeding, bringing also a vast quantity of money."<sup>17</sup> William of Tyre's words point, in the same breath, to the wealth of the Hauteville family and to the staple products of Sicily—wheat, salted meat. The link between the wealth of the Hautevilles and that of the soil they ruled was a real one. Sicilian wheat had particular importance in the twelfth century, when the European population was beginning to rise more rapidly. In the first place, it was "export-grade" wheat—durable, well-suited to long voy-

<sup>14</sup> *Const. & Reg. Friderici*; "Registrorum Fridericianorum excerpta Massiliensia," in E. Winkelmann, *Acta Imperii Inedita seculi XIII*. (Innsbruck, 1880), 599–720; *Andr. Isern.*, *passim*.

<sup>15</sup> For example, local *consuetudines* of Salerno are sometimes mentioned: Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 96.

<sup>16</sup> Attention has been drawn in recent years to a wide variety of problems in the economic history of medieval Sicily—the pattern of settlements and the development of the villages, most notably—but the sterling efforts of Sicilian medieval archaeologists cannot greatly illuminate the problem of royal intervention in economic activity. See Peri, *Uomini, città e campagne* (*supra*, note 9), for a survey of the evidence; also M. Aymard and H. Bresc, "Problemi di storia dell'Innesidamento nella Sicilia medievale e moderna, 1100–1800," *Archeologia e geografia del popolamento, Quaderni storici*, 24, fasc. 2 (1973), 945–76.

<sup>17</sup> William of Tyre, *Historia in Recueil des historiens des croisades, Historiens occidentaux*, I (Paris, 1844), 488.

ages. It was difficult to reproduce Sicilian wheat in the soils and climate of northern Italy; the other main area of production in Italy, Apulia, itself came under Roger II's rule in the 1130s.<sup>18</sup> Areas outside the Regno which grew similar grains, above all north Africa, were suffering a crisis in production during the late eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>19</sup> The result was that one ancient granary of the Roman Empire, Sicily, came to feed others, such as Tunisia and even, on occasion, Egypt (with which Roger II had a commercial treaty).<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Sicily was preeminently accessible both to Muslim and Christian merchants; and Sicily was preeminently safe—the Venetians marveled at the security of the kingdom's roads, and Roger II proclaimed his protection over merchants at his Great Court of Melfi in 1129.<sup>21</sup> All this confirmed the rôle of Sicily, rather than, say, Sardinia or Provence, as paramount supplier of basic foodstuffs to West and to East.

How did the grain trade benefit the ruler of Sicily? Not merely through taxation. In the island of Sicily, Roger II and his relatives were much the most extensive landowners. Although the church received handsome endowments of land, secular landlords were not granted large, connected chunks of Sicily as counties.<sup>22</sup> The Bonello estates, for instance, were scattered over a wide area. Countess Adelaide's family did, as will be seen, fare much better, and their lands provide evidence that the "royal family" tried to increase agricultural productivity by encouraging heavy immigration. It is hard to say how much of the island was actually reserved to the ruler. Galasso has estimated that twenty or thirty per cent of mainland southern Italy was crown demesne land, and the figure for Sicily is likely to have been even higher.<sup>23</sup> For example, a vast swathe

of royal demesne in western Sicily was transferred by William II to the newly-founded abbey of Monreale; the lands included fertile agricultural estates.<sup>24</sup>

One result of the fact that the crown was a major producer of agricultural goods was that much of the grain placed on sale in the kingdom's markets had been grown on the royal estates. Attempts were made to attract foreign merchants to the kingdom, by allowing them tax reductions on exported grain and other primary products: such privileges enhanced the wealth of the crown by ensuring that buyers were available for the produce of its estates. In that sense, Schaube's characterization of Frederick II's government as "by far the greatest cereal export firm of the kingdom" is valid also for earlier rulers.<sup>25</sup> The great privilege of 1156, issued by William I in favor of the Genoese, mentions few commodities that are not the products of the soil and pastures of Sicily—wheat, lambskins, meat, cotton;<sup>26</sup> less extensive privileges, pointing probably in a similar direction, had been issued by Roger II in favor of the Venetians and other foreigners.<sup>27</sup> What is less certain is the mechanism by which produce of the royal estates was put on sale. Frederick II's instructions on this point refer to state warehouses which did not exist throughout the Norman kingdom. But it is likely that the crown was already stockpiling grain and other goods in the Norman period, for a privilege of King Tancred, issued in 1191, refers to the obligation to transport the *frumentum curie*, from which in future the citizens of Gaeta would normally be exempt.<sup>28</sup> In the thirteenth century the term "frumentum curie" was used for the royal stocks.

<sup>18</sup> For southern grain see G. Pinto, *Il Libro del Biadaio: carastie e annona a Firenze dalla metà dell'200 al 1348*, Biblioteca storica toscana, xviii (Florence, 1978), 31–32, 107, 110; also C. Trasselli, *Mediterraneo e Sicilia all'inizio dell'epoca moderna* (Cosenza, 1977).

<sup>19</sup> M. Brett, "Ifriqiya as a market for Saharan trade from the tenth to the twelfth century AD," *Journal of African History*, 10 (1969), 347–64.

<sup>20</sup> M. Canard, "Une lettre du Caliphe Fâtîmite al-Hâfîz (524–544/1130–1149) à Roger II," *Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi ruggeriani*, 2 vols. (Palermo, 1955), I, 125–46; cf. Caspar, "Regesten" (*supra*, note 13), no. 118 (1137).

<sup>21</sup> See Alexander of Teles's description of the Great Court at Melfi in his *De rebus gestis Rogerii Siciliae regis libri quatuor*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani*, ed. G. Del Re (Naples, 1845), 99; also E. Jamison, "The Norman Administration of Apulia and Capua, more especially under Roger II and William I, 1127–1166," *BSR*, 6 (1913), 238.

<sup>22</sup> C. Cahen, *Le régime féodal de l'Italie normande* (Paris, 1940), 38, 59–60; cf. E. Mazzaresse Fardella, *I feudi comitali di Sicilia dai Normanni agli Aragonesi* (Milan, 1974).

<sup>23</sup> G. Galasso, *Dal comune medievale all'unità* (Bari, 1969), 53.

<sup>24</sup> S. Cusa, *I diplomi greci e arabi di Sicilia*, 2 vols. (Palermo, 1860–82), I, 179–244, II, 730–31.

<sup>25</sup> A. Schaube, *Handelsgeschichte der Romanischen Völker des Mittelmeergebiets bis zum Ende der Kreuzzüge* (Munich and Berlin, 1906), 505.

<sup>26</sup> C. Imperiale di Sant'Angelo, *Codice diplomatico della repubblica di Genova*, 3 vols., *Fonti per la storia d'Italia* (Rome, 1936–42), I, 338–42; Abulafia, *The Two Italies* (*supra*, note 3), 97.

<sup>27</sup> Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 59–84.

<sup>28</sup> C. Minieri Riccio, *Saggio di codice diplomatico, formato sulle antiche scritture dell'Archivio di Stato di Napoli* (Naples, 1878–83), II, 286; cf. *Const. & Reg. Friderici*, 269. It was of course normal practice for lords throughout Europe to receive payments in kind and in cash from their tenants. E. Jamison, *Catalogus Baronum*, *Fonti per la storia d'Italia* (Rome, 1972), prints a late twelfth-century list of knights from Acre, Sora, and Aquino, in northern Campania, which has been transmitted alongside the Catalogue itself. An example from Sora suggests the rights a landlord might have—no. 1282: *Lando de Sora tenet villanos xx qui reddunt solidos denariorum Papie xvij, ana xij denarios per solidum, reddunt victualium salmas de Sicilia xx, de vino salmas xij, et tenet terram ubi seminat salmas de Sicilia viij, et habet vineam unam et salutes.*

The Norman rulers were thought to make big profits on the sale of these foodstuffs. The Egyptian historian ibn al-Athir, writing in about 1200, provides picturesque evidence: he describes how the Franks were planning an expedition against Mahdia, on the African coast—probably he is thinking of the Pisan and Genoese attack on Mahdia in 1087.<sup>29</sup> Roger I of Sicily was asked to help:

Then Roger assembled his companions to ask their advice. They replied: "By the Gospel, it would be an excellent plan, and all these lands would become Christian." Roger lifted his foot and made a loud fart. He said: "By my faith, here is far better counsel than you have given." "How?" they replied. He said: "When [the Franks] are here many misfortunes will befall me: I shall have to provide a fleet, to transport them across to Africa, and also to send troops of my own. Suppose they conquer the land and become masters of it, then [commerce] in foodstuffs will pass from Sicilian hands to theirs; meanwhile we shall have to send them provisions from Sicily and I shall lose to them the money I draw each year from the sale of my produce. And if instead the expedition is unsuccessful, they will return to Sicily and cause me trouble."<sup>30</sup>

This burlesque account of manners at the Sicilian court gains added point from the other evidence that Africa was an important customer for Sicilian grain in the twelfth century. The count of Sicily had resident commercial representatives in Mahdia by 1117. There are documents of about 1140, verdicts on commercial law by north African judges, which refer to imports of Sicilian wheat into Africa, against cash payments.<sup>31</sup> Roger II even permitted the monastery of San Salvatore at Messina to export wheat to Africa, in order to acquire oil in exchange, for its own use.<sup>32</sup> But as far as the king was concerned, it was not oil but gold which spelled the attraction of Africa. Roger II minted a gold coinage, and his main source of supply was probably the gold-carrying caravans which came across the Sahara to the Mediterranean. Thus the profits

from the grain trade with Africa seem to be visible in the coined gold of the Regno.<sup>33</sup>

Royal intervention in the grain trade occurred in another important way. During famines, the later Norman kings could impose an embargo and prohibit grain from being taken out of Sicily; they could also require it to be moved from regions with a surplus to those in need. King Tancred's privilege to the Gaetans, of 1191, offers the first mention of these rights, and there is no guarantee that Roger II operated all the controls visible at the end of the century.<sup>34</sup> Under the Angevin kings, a sophisticated system of famine control was in use, whereby grain could be ordered to particular towns and provinces as soon as signs of poor harvests appeared.<sup>35</sup> In at least one aspect—the flow of information from the provinces to the centers of government—the Angevin system suggests that it was built on Norman and Hohenstaufen precedents. Another way the Normans exercised control over food supplies, in their subjects' interests, was by relieving some foodstuffs from taxation. In 1160 the Christian inhabitants of Messina were granted the right of free carriage of food into and out of Messina; there had been serious shortages, there were murmurings of revolt, and there was the embarrassment that foreign merchants, above all the Genoese, often paid lower taxes than the Mesinese themselves.<sup>36</sup> About a year later the inhabitants of Palermo were granted similar rights, as a mark of goodwill after their rebellion had ended.<sup>37</sup> Naturally, the crown was more reluctant to abolish taxation than to solve the problem of shortages by transferring stocks. To abolish taxation on food in the greatest cities of Sicily was to renounce very handsome revenues.

### III

The grain trade was not a royal monopoly, for all the controls that could be exercised. But it is often asserted that there were state monopolies in

<sup>29</sup> H. E. J. Cowdrey, "The Mahdia campaign of 1087," *EHR*, XCII, no. 362 (1977), 9.

<sup>30</sup> Ibn al-Athir, in M. Amari, *Biblioteca arabo-sicula*, versione italiana (folio edition, Turin, 1880), 115. Roger goes on to complain that the amir of Tunisia, Tamim, will say Roger has broken faith if the Sicilians offer help, since there is a treaty between Tunis and the Normans. "As far as we are concerned, Africa is always there. When we are strong we will take it."

<sup>31</sup> H. Wieruszowski, "The Norman Kingdom of Sicily and the Crusades," in H. Wieruszowski, *Politics and culture in medieval Spain and Italy* (Rome, 1971), 23; H. R. Idris, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Zirides*, 2 vols. (Paris and Algiers, 1962), II, 663–68.

<sup>32</sup> Caspar, "Regesten," no. 95 (1134). An early printed version is preserved in the Vatican: MS. Vat. Lat. 8201, fols. 493r–495v (1597).

<sup>33</sup> R. S. Lopez, "Settecento anni fa: il ritorno all'oro nell'occidente ducentesco," *RSI*, 45 (1953), 19–55, 161–98; Idris, *La Berbérie orientale*, II, 663–68; N. Levzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali* (London, 1973).

<sup>34</sup> Minieri Riccio, *Saggio di codice diplomatico*, II, 286.

<sup>35</sup> M. de Boüard, "Problèmes de subsistances dans un état médiéval: le marché et le prix des céréales au royaume angevin de Sicile," *Annales: Histoire, Économie, Société*, 10 (1938), 483–501.

<sup>36</sup> C. Giardina, *Capitoli e privilegi di Messina* (Palermo, 1937), 15–16; C. Trasselli, *I privilegi di Messina e di Trapani (1160–1355) con un'appendice sui consolati trapanesi nel secolo XV* (Palermo, 1949), 13.

<sup>37</sup> Hugo Falcandus (*supra*, note 2), 63.

twelfth-century Sicily. Edward Miller places Sicily at the head of a distinguished list: "In some places . . . receipts from tolls were overshadowed by profits from government monopolies, especially of the sale of salt. Established in Sicily in the twelfth century, this regalian right made its appearance somewhat later in Pisa, Venice, the Papal States, and elsewhere in Italy."<sup>38</sup> Rights over salt certainly appear in a few of Roger II's charters.<sup>39</sup> It is worth looking closer to see whether a 'monopoly' can be identified.

In 1134 the monastery of San Salvatore at Messina was granted the right to take one hundred *salmae* of salt each year from the salt pans at Faro—an impressive quantity.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, a privilege to the monks of San Michele di Troina allowed them to remove twenty ounces worth of salt per annum from the salt mines at Castrogiovanni (Enna), without payment of any fee or tax.<sup>41</sup> What is clear from these diplomas is that some saltworks were under direct royal control; it seems too that payment would normally be made not merely for the salt acquired, but for the right to transport it—payments from which these houses were exempted. It was not until 1231 that the crown issued edicts bringing all sources of salt under its control, setting the price of salt, and seeking to raise vast sums of money from its sale.<sup>42</sup> As late as 1226 Frederick II was permitting private ownership of salt pans; and, since his childhood, private ownership was known and recognized by the crown.<sup>43</sup> It was most likely Frederick, not the Normans, who created the lucrative

gabelle system in southern Italy and Sicily. At the system's peak, under the Angevins, profits on sales could reach as much as 1300 per cent.<sup>44</sup> But under the Normans it was really the possession of individual salt pans of great value which enriched the crown.

For evidence of royal monopolies it is necessary to turn to areas where rights over land simply did not apply: the sea, and also beneath the soil. The rich seas of Sicily produced tunny fish, and all tunny fishing was indeed reserved to the crown; it was indeed a royal monopoly. But Roger II nevertheless granted occasional beneficiaries the right to fish for tunny, or to take a fixed number of barrels of tunny from what had been landed. In 1132 the bishop of the newly-founded see at Cefalù was permitted to fish for tunny entirely freely in the waters around his town.<sup>45</sup> By 1231 regalian rights over fishing included other large or rare fish, such as sturgeons and lampreys—it is interesting to compare a surviving regalian right in the United Kingdom, that over whales washed up on shore.<sup>46</sup>

As for what was found under the ground, the Normans were by no means unique in reserving all treasure trove to themselves—the rulers of Egypt had recently operated a monopoly on Pharaonic gold, which they melted down for the mint.<sup>47</sup> William II of Sicily stated that "Each man should know that all discoveries in the kingdom, whose owner does not appear, belong particularly to our fisc."<sup>48</sup> It was not simply hoards of gold and silver in which the Normans maintained active interest. Iron was subject to restrictions, though fortunate monasteries with mines on their estates might be allowed to service their own needs. A privilege to Santa Maria di Sambucina, a Calabrian house, dated 1208, states that the monks may "for the eternal advantage and utility of this famous convent mine for iron freely and without payment on all the estates of the said monastery, according to their wishes."<sup>49</sup> This document arouses suspicion that iron mining was a re-

<sup>38</sup>E. Miller, "Government economic policies and public finance, 1000–1500," in *The Fontana Economic History of Europe, I. The Middle Ages*, ed. C. Cipolla (London, 1970), 348.

<sup>39</sup>Caspar, "Regesten," no. 41 (1121), no. 98 (1134), no. 191 (1145)—cf. no. 7 of 1109, accidentally transposed by Caspar; P. Collura, "Appendice al regesto dei diplomi di re Ruggero compilato da Erich Caspar," *Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi ruggeriani* (Palermo, 1955), no. 6, no. 78 (*s.d.*).

<sup>40</sup>Caspar, "Regesten," no. 98, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS. Vat. Lat. 8201, p. 4. It was also permitted to take fifty barrels of fish from the tunny-infested waters around Milazzo, and a large amount of ripe grapes from the royal vineyards at Messina, until the vines of San Salvatore were themselves ready for exploitation.

<sup>41</sup>Collura, "Appendice," no. 78.

<sup>42</sup>Winkelman, *Acta* (*supra*, note 14), no. 773, 610.

<sup>43</sup>A. Pratesi, *Carte latine di abbazie calabresi provenienti dall'Archivio Aldobrandini*, ST, CXC VII (Vatican City, 1958), no. 64 (1208). On the eve, almost, of Frederick's institution of a monopoly on salt there is to be found a sale of a salt pan to the monastery of Santa Maria di Casanova: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Chigi E. VI 188, perg. 14 (1226). The salt pan was in the vicinity of Siponto—one of the most productive regions. Cf. Pope Honorius III's privilege to Santa Maria di Casanova, in 1225: *ibid.*, perg. 13, where salt is mentioned. MS Chigi E. VI. 182, perg. 40, of 1203 reveals the interests of the important monastery of Santa Maria of the Tremiti in the salt pans of Siponto.

<sup>44</sup>Pryor, "Foreign policy" (*supra*, note 8), 50.

<sup>45</sup>Caspar, "Regesten," no. 5, no. 30, no. 41, no. 55 (forgery), no. 69, no. 73, no. 98, no. 118, no. 119, no. 165, no. 189, no. 200, no. 214, no. 216, and Collura, "Appendice," no. 75—but some mention "fish" rather than "tunny fish." The Cefalù privilege is Caspar, no. 73.

<sup>46</sup>Winkelman, *Acta*, no. 783, 613.

<sup>47</sup>H. Rabie, *The Financial System of Egypt, AH 564–741/AD 1169–1341* (Oxford, 1972), 169–70 for gold from the Pharaonic tombs; 87–88 for emeralds.

<sup>48</sup>*Const. regum* (*supra*, note 6), Lib. III, tit. 14 (xxxv). The legends about William II link him to underground treasure: Pitre, *Fiabe*, 23–34; Abulafia, "The reputation of a Norman king" (*supra*, note 5), 144.

<sup>49</sup>Pratesi, *Carte latine* (*supra*, note 43), no. 89.

galian right; and the Neapolitan jurist Andrea di Isernia, writing in about 1300, does attribute a *jus ferri* to the Normans.<sup>50</sup> So too there existed rights over the manufacture of steel and of pitch—some of these rights may have been enforced in order to service the needs of the royal fleet, and for other military purposes.<sup>51</sup>

There is a unifying principle in the exemptions granted to monasteries and churches in Sicily. The prime purpose of the privileges was to make the beneficiary self-sufficient in basic supplies. Thus a privilege to the monks of Lipari, partly an island-based community, frees them from taxation on grain, butter, and cheese produced on the monastery's estates and transported in the monastery's ships for the monastery's use.<sup>52</sup> The life of the monastery obviously depended on the transport of goods by boat among the Lipari islands and to Sicily. But the same privilege forbids, in the strongest terms, the carriage of food from outside sources with the intention of abusing the monks' rights and going scot-free; in other words, professional commercial activity was severely frowned upon. These attempts to make the monasteries self-sufficient could be taken very far. The canons of the Palatine Chapel in Palermo were to receive, at Roger's behest, quantities of wheat and barley, as well as sums of gold.<sup>53</sup> The privilege of 1148 issued by Roger in favor of San Giovanni degli Eremiti, Palermo, allows many invaluable rights: free pasture throughout the royal demesne; sixty-two loaves of fine flour per day, each loaf to weigh one pound; 998 *congia* of wine each year; twenty-one barrels of tunny fish; and a large amount of gold from the *duana* at Palermo, to pay for the monks' clothing.<sup>54</sup> Yet the intention was not to establish standards of relative luxury. If the king visited, there was to be no elaborate ceremony: he was to be served the same food as the monks themselves.

These privileges, since they consist of grants out

of the king's pocket, say much about royal revenues. The privilege to San Giovanni also indicates an important limitation on royal generosity: the monks are instructed to refuse the gift of any lands subject to *servitium*; in other words, the king is not prepared to see his sources of military manpower eroded. Lynn White has indicated that this policy over *servitium* developed in the reign of Roger II; earlier grants had not been subject to such limitations; later ones did tend to be.<sup>55</sup>

A noticeable feature of the royal grants is the frequent cession of rights to pasture animals freely. Santa Maria di Gala in 1105, San Salvatore at Messina in 1131, Santa Trinità di Cava in 1133—these are just a few of the houses to receive rights of access to the royal estates for their flocks;<sup>56</sup> and another list could be compiled of those, like the monks of Lipari-Patti, who were free to run their pigs in the royal woods.<sup>57</sup> The post-Rogerian diplomas point to another facet of this range of activities; the Genoese were allowed to export animal skins and salted meat such as hams; so too were the Sicilian daughter-houses of monasteries in the Holy Land, which drew some of their supplies from the Regno.<sup>58</sup> Animal products were thus an important constituent of the Sicilian export trade of the twelfth century. And so it is hardly surprising that the crown took some interest in pastoral problems. William II legislated on the problems generated by the transhumance of sheep—the damage they caused to agricultural land, especially to the vineyards of Apulia: “While we were pleasantly traveling through Apulia, a general cry and complaint was raised everywhere to our Highness.”<sup>59</sup> There were rustlers at work, who “plotted madly in secret” to steal animals; worse still, the king's own representatives, the foresters, were guilty of severe malpractice, “inflicting very serious injury and many unjust burdens on everyone.”<sup>60</sup> At least this indicates attempts to tax the pastoral activities of Apulia, though neither to the king's nor to his subjects' liking.

Although animal products were exported, there did not exist in Norman Sicily an extensive textile industry or leather industry. There is some evidence for the export from Sicily of modest cloths

<sup>50</sup> Calabrian monasteries seem to have done well in mining privileges: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Barb. Lat. 3217, fol. 99<sup>v</sup>, shows that *Federicus Imperator confirmat Radulfo abbati et monasterio fontis Laureati . . . pascula libere per totam Calabram, salem per omnem scelinas, et venam ferri per omnes mineras Calabrie cavare atque percipere, et quod invenitur in tenimento monasterii tota sit ipsius, emere et et [sic] vendere ubilibet sine exactione, teoleonatico, plateatico et passagio, portulagio anconatico vel falangatico in omnibus portubus et littoribus regni Sicilie.*

<sup>51</sup> *Andr. Isern.*, p. 14; cf. Caspar, “Regesten,” no. 44 (1124/5).

<sup>52</sup> Caspar, “Regesten,” no. 93 (1134).

<sup>53</sup> Caspar, “Regesten,” no. 126, and Collura, “Appendice,” no. 53 (1140); Caspar, no. 216 (1148).

<sup>54</sup> A. Garofalo, *Tabularium regiae ac imperialis Capellae Collegiatae divi Petri in regio Panormitano palatio Ferdinandi II regni utriusque Siciliae regis jussu editum ac notis illustratum* (Palermo, 1835), 11–13.

<sup>55</sup> L. T. White, *Latin Monasticism in Norman Sicily* (Cambridge, Mass., 1938), 128.

<sup>56</sup> Caspar, “Regesten,” nos. 5, 23a, 69, 88.

<sup>57</sup> Caspar, “Regesten,” no. 152—cf. nos. 48, 69, 196.

<sup>58</sup> W. Holtzmann, “Papst-, Kaiser- und Normannenurkunden aus Unteritalien,” I, *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, 35 (1955), 70, no. 7; White, *Latin Monasticism*, 207–42; Abulafia, *The Two Italies* (*supra*, note 3), 91–94.

<sup>59</sup> *Liber Augustalis*, III, tit. 34 (LV).

<sup>60</sup> *Liber Augustalis*, III, tit. 32 (LIV), tit. 34 (LV).



and leather goods in the documents of the Cairo Genizah, many of which date from the eleventh century.<sup>61</sup> But the main interest of the rulers of Sicily was in the export of raw fibers and skins—cotton as well as animal products—and royal interest in developing a cloth industry is only visible in the late thirteenth century.<sup>62</sup> By then the Lombards and Tuscans had built highly successful industries of their own, using Sicilian raw materials to some extent, and the Mezzogiorno was left well behind. There was, however, one branch of textile production which did interest the Norman kings greatly. The royal treasury under Roger II produced magnificent silk garments. Roger II's silken mantle of 1133/34, now preserved in Vienna, carries an Arabic inscription which proclaims: "[this mantle] belongs to the articles worked in the royal treasury, in which fortune and honor, prosperity and perfection, merit and distinction have their home."<sup>63</sup> It is not necessary to look far beyond this inscription to see why the Sicilian kings were so interested in silk production: this is another of their many attempts to mimic Byzantine imperial practice—an attempt made the more successful, no doubt, after the capture of the Jewish silk workers of Thebes by Roger's fleet in 1147.<sup>64</sup> More mysterious is the link between the silk production at court and that of the rest of Sicily and Calabria. André Guillou has attempted to demonstrate that there were vast mulberry plantations in the toe of Italy during the eleventh century, probably supplying Sicily and Greece with raw silk;<sup>65</sup> in the same period Sicily

exported silken goods, mostly of medium quality, to other parts of the Mediterranean—so the Cairo Genizah testifies. But by the mid-twelfth century there is less evidence of an active silk industry in Sicily; indeed, tradition maintains that, after so many years of production of silk for export, Sicily finally exported the precious know-how of silk making, and laid the foundation of the silk industry of Lucca.<sup>66</sup> The crown certainly seems to have reserved its interest for a very special area of the silk industry; and this may reveal something about the king's attitude to economic life in the Regno. The income from raw materials and foodstuffs was so vast that there was no obvious advantage in encouraging industrial production. Finished goods could be had at court from visiting merchants; and there was the money to pay for a wide range of exotic cloths, oriental, Lombard and even Flemish.<sup>67</sup>

#### IV

It was the movement of raw materials out of the ports, finished goods into the ports which represented a sure source of income to the crown. The question here is not the origins of these taxes in Byzantine and Arab practice, local or foreign, but how lucrative the taxes on trade actually were.<sup>68</sup> For instance, it has been suggested that one tax—the *anchoraticum*, imposed on ships for the right to enter port—was levied only so that vessels would contribute to the maintenance of the harbor installations they used.<sup>69</sup> Some taxes were farmed out, too; this meant that the crown could expect a fixed annual payment, irrespective of fluctuations in taxable activities. Perhaps the best way, therefore, to penetrate the complex ganglion of the Sicilian commercial taxes is to illustrate some of them in operation as a ship arrives in the kingdom and as

<sup>61</sup> S. D. Goitein, "Sicily and southern Italy in the Cairo Geniza documents," *ASiSicOr*, 67 (1971), 9–33.

<sup>62</sup> Pryor, "Foreign policy" (*supra*, note 8), 47; R. Caggese, *Roberto d'Angiò e i suoi tempi*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1922–31), I, 627. For the export of unprocessed cotton from Malta (part of the royal demesne), see: D. Abulafia, "Henry Count of Malta and his Mediterranean Activities, 1203–1230," in *Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta before the Knights*, ed. A. T. Luttrell (London, 1975), 106–7.

<sup>63</sup> Fillitz, *Schatzkammer* (*supra*, note 4), no. 163; also U. Monneret de Villard, "La tessitura palermitana sotto i Normanni," *ST*, CXXIII (Vatican City, 1946), especially 464–71, where the idea of a silk workshop is rejected in favor of the idea that silk was prepared in the royal treasury; A. Lipinski, "Le insegne regali dei sovrani di Sicilia e la scuola orafa palermitana," *Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi sulla Sicilia normanna* (Palermo, 1973), 162–94; also *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, trans. R. J. C. Broadhurst (London, 1952), 341.

<sup>64</sup> R. S. Lopez, "The silk industry in the Byzantine empire," *Speculum*, 20 (1945), 1–42; Otto of Freising, in *MGH*, SS, XX, 370; *Annales Cavenses*, in *MGH*, SS, III, 192.

<sup>65</sup> A. Guillou, *Le brébon de la métropole byzantine de Région (vers 1050)*, Corpus des actes grecs, 4 (Vatican City, 1974); A. Guillou, "Production and Profits in the Byzantine Province of Italy (Tenth to Eleventh Centuries): An Expanding Society," *DOP*, 28 (1974), 89–109; A. Guillou, "La soie du katépanat d'Italie," *TM*, 6 (1976), 69–84. Guillou's attempt to provide a global figure for the value of the silk produced in Calabria possibly stretches the evidence beyond its limits.

<sup>66</sup> For Sicily and Lucca, see C. Meek, "The trade and industry of Lucca in the fourteenth century," *Historical Studies*, VI, ed. T. W. Moody (London, 1968), 41–42.

<sup>67</sup> Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 217–19, 255–56.

<sup>68</sup> As has been suggested here, the answer to the problem of the origins of the Sicilian financial machinery is that it was a combination of elements from many origins. For comparative material, see Rabie, *The Financial System of Egypt* (*supra*, note 47); J. Riley-Smith, "Government in Latin Syria and the commercial privileges of foreign merchants," in *Relations between East and West in the Middle Ages*, ed. D. Baker (Edinburgh, 1973), 109–32; H. Antoniadis-Bibicou, *Recherches sur les douanes à Byzance* (Paris, 1963).

<sup>69</sup> L. Bianchini, *Della storia delle finanze del regno di Napoli*, vol. I (Naples, 1834), 108–9. Bianchini's lack of footnotes is frustrating; often he simply seems to be extending the little information available from Andreas of Isernia, but he claims to have used charter material too. See MS Barb. Lat. 3217, fol. 99<sup>v</sup>, for exemption from the anchor tax. Smaller vessels paid the *falan-gagium*, instead, but it is not clear how the rates differed: Bianchini, 108.



its merchants disperse. But, since a twelfth-century Pegolotti is lacking, the ship and the merchants will have to be hypothetical—a reconstruction from general statements made in royal privileges of exemption and in occasional travelers' tales.

A ship owned by merchants who possessed no special rights of exemption—foreign Jews, perhaps—would, on arriving in Messina, be subject to a ten per cent levy on the value of the goods it brought into the kingdom—and subsequently, out of the kingdom too.<sup>70</sup> The name of the *ad valorem* tax, *commercium*, is reminiscent of that of a trade tax in the Byzantine empire, the *κομμέριον*; in Sicily the *commercium* was also known as the *plateaticum*, and later as the *jus dohane*. According to the nineteenth-century political economist Lodovico Bianchini, Roger II reformed and elaborated this tax, which had existed “da antichissimo tempo”—whatever that really means; Roger is supposed to have levied it not on the “intrinsic value” of the goods carried through the ports, but on the anticipated value in the markets—not on the wholesale, but on the retail price. It was levied anew each time an item was resold, which gave rise to a popular saying, “uno essere il fondacho, e cento le dohane” (“you pay the warehouse tax once, but the customs tax a hundred times”).<sup>71</sup> Unfortunately, Bianchini provided no authority for his many statements about Norman finances; and it has to be admitted that it was only under Frederick II that state warehouses were widely established, in which all imported goods must be registered.<sup>72</sup> Even dispensing with the *jus fundaci*, our hypothetical merchants have had to pay in addition the *anchoraticum* for entering port, the *scalaticum* or *jus colli* on each bale or load carried from ship to shore, and taxes at the city gates on goods they transported into the countryside.<sup>73</sup> Some of these taxes were more effectively levied than others. At Palermo there was close supervision, but this very fact reveals there was frequent evasion. Ibn Jubayr, secretary to the governor of Granada, describes a visit to Palermo in 1184–85. Outside the royal palace in Palermo he met some Christians, one of whom said to him and his companions: “Look to what you have with you, pilgrims, lest the officials of the Customs descend on you!” The Christians thought, ibn Jubayr explains, that they were actually carrying, or rather smuggling,

merchandise; but in fact they were returning home from a pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>74</sup>

Royal control of tax collecting was weakest outside the towns and perhaps weakest of all in rural southern Italy. It has been seen that William II was worried about the activities of his foresters in Apulia. In 1187 he adopted an imaginative solution to the problem of corrupt officials and of failure to transmit funds to the royal fisc: he actually abolished payment on passage through the roads, bridges, and rivers of his demesne in southern Italy.<sup>75</sup> Tax pirates had set themselves up and were exacting payments which were not due to them; William decided it was more important to display his generosity to his subjects than to worry about the collection of funds that never in any case seemed to reach him.

To return, however, to the hypothetical merchants: their trials would continue when they penetrated the interior, even if they avoided the tolls on roads and bridges. There was a tax on the exchange of money to be paid; usurious transactions risked the royal wrath; and even the merchant contract, the *commenda*, was circumscribed by late Norman legislation which brought contractual disputes into the royal courts. Those who broke the terms of a *commenda* or a loan agreement, by keeping money beyond the stipulated date of repayment, were to be fined two thirds of the sum involved—one third to the offended party, one third to the royal fisc.<sup>76</sup> The crown was clearly trying to edge into commercial jurisdiction; indeed, even privileged foreign merchants, such as the Genoese, were for long denied the special tribunals which they possessed in their colonies elsewhere in the Mediterranean. An agreement between Roger II and the men of Savona and Genoa indicates that, as early as 1127/28, the ruler maintained a deep interest in business disputes which gave rise to legal action.<sup>77</sup>

The attitude of the crown to illicit moneylending shows, once again, an attempt to bring commercial problems into the royal courts. The *Liber Augustalis* of Frederick II contains a law attributed to King Roger: “We have established that, in accordance with the decrees of the Lord Pope on usury recently

<sup>74</sup> Ibn Jubayr (*supra*, note 63), 347.

<sup>70</sup> Giardina, *Capitoli* (*supra*, note 36) 15–16.

<sup>71</sup> Bianchini, *Della storia delle finanze*, 99–102; Yver, *Le commerce et les marchands* (*supra*, note 8), 47.

<sup>72</sup> Winkelmann, *Acta*, nos. 791–795, 617–20.

<sup>73</sup> *Codice diplomatico genovese* (*supra*, note 26), I, 338–41; Caspar, “Regesten,” no. 118. *Jus colli*: Bianchini, *Della storia delle finanze*, 108.

<sup>75</sup> Minieri Riccio, *Saggio di codice diplomatico* (*supra*, note 28), Supplemento, I, 20–21; E. Jamison, *Admiral Eugenius of Sicily: his Life and Work* (London, 1957), 341, Calendar no. 12.

<sup>76</sup> *Andr. Isern.*, 14: *jus cambii*. *Liber Augustalis*, Lib. I, tit. 8, tit. 9 (vi), for usury; Lib. I, tit. 44 (LXVII), for the *commenda*.

<sup>77</sup> Caspar, “Regesten,” no. 54; the edition by G. Filippi is not entirely satisfactory: “Patto di pace tra Ruggiero II Normanno e la città di Savona,” *AStNap*, 14 (1889), 750–57; cf. Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 65–70.

promulgated in the Roman curia, complaints about usurers which have been brought to our court should be confined to it and terminated in it.”<sup>78</sup> In fact this is almost certainly a law of William II, of 1179 or later, since the reference seems to be to the decrees of the Third Lateran Council, of that year. What is clear is that, in a land of several religions, it was not so easy to enforce papal decrees on usury. Ibn Jubayr and “Hugo Falcandus” concur in stating that even at the end of the twelfth century the majority of merchants resident in Palermo were still Muslim;<sup>79</sup> Frederick II, for his part, exempted the Jews, a sizeable minority in Sicily, from the full force of his highly orthodox legislation against usury, of 1231.<sup>80</sup> And here it is actually possible to abandon the hypothetical ship and merchants, to observe a Christian merchant called William lending money to a group of Muslims in the mid-twelfth century. The transactions are recorded in a unique contract for trade along the coast of Sicily, written in Arabic.<sup>81</sup> Each loan is expressed in both pounds of silver and gold tari, and each loan sets a different exchange rate, even though the majority have the same term, fifteen days. The differences in exchange rate reflect differences in credit worthiness, or in the ability to haggle; but above all they reflect the imposition of a moneylender’s fee. Incidentally, the pounds of silver, and William too, are very likely Genoese, since the exchange rates, even allowing for a usurious mark-up, float around those current in Genoa in the 1160s.<sup>82</sup> The essential point is that royal legislation did not greatly hamper the provision of credit inside Sicily or frighten away foreign merchants who might have come to Sicily. Devices to cover usurious transac-

tions were extremely sophisticated by the mid-twelfth century.

The lawyer Andrea di Isernia divides the taxes and rights the crown was entitled to claim into two categories: the “nova jura” of the Normans, and the “vetera” of more distant rulers.<sup>83</sup> Some of the “vetera” have been encountered: *anchoraticum*, *scalaticum*; also the rights over pigs in the forests. Sicily was an important center of cheese production in the Middle Ages, so it is no surprise to find an ancient *jus casei*, though apparently it was not applied throughout the kingdom.<sup>84</sup> And some of the “ancient rights” were, if Andrea’s list is to be trusted, revised and extended by the Normans—the taxes on slaughtering animals, and on fishing. Many of these ancient rights were, of course, traditional rights reserved to feudal lords and practiced by the Lombard rulers of southern Italy before the Norman conquest. Although the crown sought to extend its control over the use of pasture, waters, and much else, it had to compete with, and even succumb to, existing local claims to such control. Thus in 1137, during a brief period of rule over the papal enclave of Benevento, Roger II renounced his rights over hunting, fishing, wine, olives, and labor services—essentially the rights many feudal lords would hope to possess in much of western Europe.<sup>85</sup> Benevento is a good test for the “ancient rights,” because it largely escaped Norman control, and preserved many of those rights relatively unhindered. Apparently, the Norman conquerors found the ancient *jura* well established in southern Italy, and even introduced some of them into Sicily in the late eleventh century. Two documents of 892, analyzed by Vera von Falkenhausen, show the Byzantine στρατηγοί of Longobardia promising the monks of Montecassino and San Vincenzo al Volturno, together with houses subject to them, imperial protection and exemption from a wide range of taxes.<sup>86</sup> Imposts from which the monks were freed include those on passage through harbors, on bridges and on waterways—taxes such as the *ripaticum*, known under the same or similar names in the twelfth century.

What was new, of course, was the enforcement of royal rights, over a vast area. Succession to land

<sup>78</sup> *Liber Augustalis*, Lib. I, tit. 8 (vi); *The Liber Augustalis or Constitutions of Melfi Promulgated by the Emperor Frederick II for the Kingdom of Sicily in 1231*, trans. by J. M. Powell (Syracuse, N.Y., 1971), 11, note 20.

<sup>79</sup> Ibn Jubayr, 348, Hugo Falcandus, 57.

<sup>80</sup> *Liber Augustalis*, I, tit. 9 (vi). Frederick himself took care to avoid the payment of interest on loans he had raised, whether out of principle or in order to save money it is hard to say. See, e.g., *Const. & Reg. Friderici*, 239: *ne per moram Curia nostra incurrat dispendia usurarum*.

<sup>81</sup> Cusa, *I diplomî* (*supra*, note 24), II, 502–4, 719; translation in G. Trovato, *Sopravvivenze arabe in Sicilia: documenti arabo-siculi del periodo normanno* (Monreale, 1949), 73–76. The document presents Muslims from Cefalù and Corleone, and indicates a projected sea-voyage to Messina—presumably from Cefalù—and thence back to Palermo.

<sup>82</sup> See, e.g., Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 196, 248, 250—the document summarized on pp. 247–48, involving Muslim merchants from Sicily who are trading through Genoa, demands comparison with the Cusa/Trovato text. See also P. Spufford and W. Wilkinson, *Interim Listing of the Exchange rates of Europe* (Social Science Research Council paper, Keele, 1977), 70, which does not, however, indicate that the exchange rates given for Sicily may conceal usurious transactions.

<sup>83</sup> *Andr. Isern.*, 14.

<sup>84</sup> Bianchini, *Della storia delle finanze*, 111–12; Goitein, “Sicily and southern Italy” (*supra*, note 61), 15; Pryor, “Foreign policy,” 50.

<sup>85</sup> Caspar, “Regesten,” no. 120; cf. the valuable material in E. Galasso, *Saggi di storia beneventana* (Benevento, 1963).

<sup>86</sup> Vera von Falkenhausen, *Untersuchungen über die byzantinische Herrschaft in Süditalien vom 9. bis ins 11. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 1967), 162–64.

must be approved by the central government; regalian rights are gathered into the hands of the government. The two processes were closely linked: in confirming rights of succession, the ruler could also emphasize that he was withholding access to regalian rights. The Norman law codes fulminated against those who sought to diminish the *regalia* or the *bona publica*.<sup>87</sup> Thus the king was able to defend and even to enlarge his control over his own rights. In adopting this course, Roger II and his successors were practicing the methods of several twelfth-century monarchs elsewhere—albeit, in Roger's case, a little precociously. Frederick Barbarossa, no less inspired by the texts of Roman law, insisted on his regalian rights at the Diet of Roncaglia, in 1158: and that meant he insisted on his fiscal rights, *inter alia*. But, whereas for Barbarossa recovery of the regalia was to prove an all but impossible objective, for Roger of Sicily it was a reality, and a source of vast income.<sup>88</sup>

## V

The fertility of the kingdom, the tax structure, the monopolies should not, however, give rise to deception. To produce its crops for the international market Sicily had to be reasonably well populated. But internal wars, Byzantine attacks, and, finally, the Norman conquest, had created large empty areas which needed to be resettled. Moreover, there was substantial emigration, even slaughter, of Muslims in Sicily. What had been, in 1060, a Muslim majority in the Sicilian population dwindled by the 1220s to at most 20,000 and finally, with the settlement of the Saracens at Lucera, to virtually nothing. So the Normans had not

simply to fill the gaps created by the crises of the eleventh century; the island of Sicily was continually drained of Muslim agricultural manpower and replacements needed to be found. Not merely were these replacements found, but they radically altered the culture of Sicily. A Greek- and Arabic-speaking island, with orthodox churches, mosques, and synagogues, became a Greek- and Italian-speaking island, empty of mosques but full of Latin churches; and the impetus for this change came in part from the ruling families. The city of Messina, described in the Cairo Genizah letters as second-rate and filthy, became a great center of Christian settlement, so full of inhabitants that, as has been seen, there were frequent food shortages even by 1160. Moreover, these changes took place at a time when other frontier regions were competing for manpower. Joshua Prawer has described attempts to colonize the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, some of which were quite successful.<sup>89</sup> It really seems that the Norman Kingdom of Sicily was even more successful.

As early as the 1090s Roger I was expressing concern over the empty areas in Sicily. A privilege to the church of Catania, of 1091, permits the bishop to claim rights over those peasants who had fled from the estates of Catania to live among their Muslim coreligionists elsewhere.<sup>90</sup> The bishops of Lipari-Patti made strong attempts, in the same decade, to attract "Latin" settlers to their lands, promising special privileges.<sup>91</sup> But the main focus of Latin settlement was to the south and east. "Hugo Falcandus" talks of "Buteriam, Placiam ceteraque Lombardorum oppida," and he names Piazza Armerina as the real stronghold of the "Lombardi."<sup>92</sup> Some "Lombardi" were certainly privileged: in 1145 Roger II freed the Lombards of Santa Lucia from the obligation to serve in the royal fleet, and ascribed to them other rights similar to those enjoyed at Randazzo, near Catania—indeed, there have even been exaggerated attempts to deduce from this diploma that all "Lombardi" were specially privileged in this way. There was a stronghold called Lumardeia or Lombardia, which formed part of the estates of the Cappella Palatina

<sup>87</sup> F. Brandileone, "Assise regum regni Sicilie," in his *Scritti di storia giuridica dell'Italia meridionale*, Società di storia patria per la Puglia. Documenti e monografie, XXXIV (Bari, 1970), 381, 383, 392, 401.

<sup>88</sup> Mention should be made of Evelyn Jamison's view that Roger II ceded his right to collect certain tolls (market taxes) to many mainland barons, in return for their loyalty and their recognition that they owed the crown military service: Jamison, *Catalogus Baronum*, p. xxii; also "Additional work by E. Jamison on the *Catalogus Baronum*," *BISI*, 83 (1971), 22. One of these barons was perhaps Robert of Conversano: a commercial agreement of 1148 between Molfetta, in Apulia, and Dubrovnik, in Dalmatia, indicates that the lord of Molfetta probably possessed rights over taxes on trade: D. S. H. Abulafia, "Dalmatian Ragusa and the Norman Kingdom of Sicily," *SIEERev*, 54 (1976), 414–15; T. Smičiklas, *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae* (Zagreb, 1874–75), III, 75–76; J. Radonić, *Acta et diplomata ragusina* (Belgrade, 1934), I, 17–18. Robert of Conversano also granted exemptions from other dues to churches in his lands, acting in a manner not dissimilar to the early Norman rulers themselves: A. Petrucci, "Note di diplomatica normanna: i documenti di Roberto di Bassunvilla," conte di Conversano e conte di Loritello," *BISI*, 71 (1959), 113–40.

<sup>89</sup> J. Prawer, "Colonization activities in the Latin Kingdom," in his *Crusader Institutions* (Oxford, 1980), 102–42.

<sup>90</sup> R. Pirro, *Sicilia sacra* (Palermo, 1733–74), 522–23. White, *Latin Monasticism* (*supra*, note 55), 106. As White observes, "this Breton Benedictine [the abbot of Catania] was to step into the shoes of Ibn ath-Thumnah, the last emir of Catania." The privilege of 1091 is also of interest as one of the few Sicilian charters to refer to the conquerors as the "Northmanni."

<sup>91</sup> Pirro, *Sicilia sacra*, II, 772 (1094).

<sup>92</sup> Hugo Falcandus, 73.

and stood quite near Enna; not too far from that was a region known until the fourteenth century as the Lombard Hills.<sup>93</sup>

Who were the Lombards, and what was their link to Roger II? In the first place, they were obviously grouped closely together, tending to live in eastern Sicily, in areas partly evacuated by Muslim refugees. They even created a little more elbow-room for themselves, in the 1160s, during the time of troubles, when they launched pogroms against their Saracen neighbors, murdering many and prompting others to flee to the south and west of Sicily, to what "Hugo Falcandus" calls the Saracen safe-places.<sup>94</sup> In the second place, the Lombards had a more or less common origin; they were not south Italians, as the names they give in the witness lists to Sicilian charters testify: Obertus of Savona, Paganus de Florentia, Henricus de Bubio, Barbayayra—a Genoese name.<sup>95</sup> Now, although many of the Lombards who can be identified came from northwestern Italy, it is particularly striking how many have names recalling the Ligurian coast. As well as Obertus of Savona, there is Gualterius de Garrexio, whose name is reminiscent of a town to the west of Savona, and the Genoese who appear are not just merchants but priests and landowners.<sup>96</sup> Enthusiastic philologists tried to increase still further the volume of the evidence by arguing that the dialects spoken in several modern Sicilian towns show strong northwest Italian influences. Aidone, Nicosia, Novara di Sicilia have dialects which can, according to a modern authority, be classed as "linguisticamente galloitaliche."<sup>97</sup> There is certainly no reason to doubt that north-Italian dialects had a

profound influence on the development of romance speech in Sicily, and the rôle played by the first large group of Latin settlers and Italian speakers in the formation of Sicilian should not be underestimated. Attempts to supply exact isoglosses are perhaps less convincing. And attempts to use place-name evidence are dangerous: "Novara" may just be copied from Novara in northern Italy, but the derivation of "Piazza" from "Piacenza," which appealed to eighteenth-century scholars, is a delightful fantasy.<sup>98</sup>

The next question is how the crown was involved in the settlement of the Lombards. Perhaps it is best to begin with evidence from Frederick II's reign. In 1231 the emperor issued a generous privilege in which he freed immigrants into the Regno from tax payments for ten years.<sup>99</sup> Frederick's name is particularly linked to Oddo de Camerana, who seems to have been a Ghibelline sympathizer, and who brought a group of settlers south to Sicily; his name is linked also to Obertus de Mustacciolo, who is quite possibly mythical, but who is said to have resettled Piazza Armerina and to have come from Piacenza.<sup>100</sup> For Roger II's period, the evidence available suggests that it was not so much the king who provided the main initiative, though Roger's privilege to Santa Lucia shows the king did possess interest. The patrons of the movement were, rather, Roger's closest relatives—and this fact explains many of the known characteristics of the Lombard settlements.

It was Roger's uncle, Henry del Vasto, brother of Countess Adelaide, who perhaps gave the greatest impetus to the colonization of eastern Sicily by the Lombards. He abandoned the estates of his family, the powerful Aleramici, who lived near Savona in northwestern Italy; it is not clear whether he left because of a disagreement with his brother over

<sup>93</sup> Garofalo, *Tabularium* (*supra*, note 54), 19. Cf. F. Piazza, *Le colonie e i dialetti lombardo-siculi. Saggio di studi neolatini* (Catania, 1921), 16–17: at Castrogiovanni (Enna) there are memories of a Lombard castle—"u 'castiedu di Lumardia"—in the plain below the city. The "Monti di Lombardia" were the hills around Piazza and Aidone; the term appears until the late fourteenth century—L. Villari, "Note sui comuni Lombardi di Sicilia," *Archivio storico messinese*, 58–59 (= ser. 3, 9–10, 1957–9), 185. On the question whether the Lombard communities were specially privileged, see R. Gregorio, *Considerazioni sopra la storia di Sicilia dai tempi normanni sino ai presenti*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Palermo, 1831–39), I, 167, note 25. I am grateful to Rosalind Brown of Clare College, Cambridge, for providing this and other references to the Lombard settlers in Sicily.

<sup>94</sup> Hugo Falcandus, 70. For the general distribution of the Lombards, see the survey by I. Peri, "La questione delle colonie lombarde in Sicilia," *Bollettino storico-bibliografico subalpino*, 57 (1957), 253–80.

<sup>95</sup> C. A. Garufi, "Gli Aleramici e i Normanni in Sicilia e nelle Puglie. Documenti e ricerche," *Centenario della nascita di Michele Amari*, 2 vols. (Palermo, 1910), I, 69, 79–80; Pirro, *Sicilia sacra*, 74; Villari, "Note," 155–62.

<sup>96</sup> Garufi, "Gli Aleramici," 69; Piazza, *Le colonie e i dialetti*, 18.

<sup>97</sup> G. Tropea, "Effetti di simbiosi linguistica nelle parlate gallo-italiche di Aidone, Nicosia e Novara di Sicilia," *Bollettino dell'Atlante*

*linguistico italiano*, new series, disp. 13/14 (1966), 3–5. Examples of gallo-italicisms from Nicosia are:

subito (suddenly)	ampréssa / ː amarama
menzogna (lie, untruth)	mɛnzónña / ː nfúrra,

(Tropea, 47). See also G. Tropea, "Un dialetto moribondo: il galloitalico di Francavilla Sicilia," *Bollettino del Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani*, 9 (1963), 133–52. Cf. Piazza, *Le colonie e i dialetti*, 44, 334, and especially 379–80, where a strange attempt to quantify Ligurian, Piedmontese, Lombard and other northern influences on the dialects of Sicily is presented.

<sup>98</sup> G. P. Chiarandà, *Piazza, città di Sicilia* (Messina, 1654); Piazza, *Le colonie e i dialetti*, 18, is unusually cautious about the link with Piacenza. Rosalind Brown informs me that the twelfth-century form of "Novara" (Sicily) was probably Nugaria—compare Nocera: D. Olivieri, *Dizionario etimologico italiano* (Milan, 1961), s.v.

<sup>99</sup> Winkelmann, *Acta*, no. 799, 622–23.

<sup>100</sup> Piazza, *Le colonie e i dialetti*, 40–42.

their rights at home. But his renunciation of Ligurian lands was amply compensated by the acquisition of Sicilian ones. He received lands around Paternò and Butera, in eastern and southern Sicily; other Aleramici received lands in southern Italy.<sup>101</sup> Henry of Paternò's interest in cultivating the soil is revealed in a diploma of 1136, where he grants a monk—not "Lombard" but Amalfitan—the church of San Leo at Mongibello, with "as much of the land around that church as you can work and cultivate by sowing it and by planting vines."<sup>102</sup> A few years later his son Simon is found making grants which echo faithfully the terms of royal privileges to Sicilian churches: free access to wood, pasture on the count's lands.<sup>103</sup> And those lands seem to have had a reputation for fertility; in 1162 Frederick Barbarossa promised the Genoese 250 knights' fees carved out of the lands of Count Simon, by then deceased, if the emperor gained their help in his projected invasion of Sicily.<sup>104</sup> Many Genoese were thus still interested in emigration to Sicily, to join many fellow-Ligurians who had preceded them—indeed, later legend has the Genoese conquering and colonizing the inland town of Caltagirone as early as the year 1000.<sup>105</sup> The Lombard settlers did suffer a blow when the last of the Aleramici, Henry of Paternò's grandson, Roger Sclavus, was exiled for his leadership of the pogroms against the Saracens, and for other crimes; some Lombards left with him, and Piazza had to be abandoned.<sup>106</sup> But the continued strength of the Lombard settlement is clear from an event in 1168, when the "Randacini, Vacarienses, Capiciani, Nicosiani, Maniacenses ceterique Lombardi" offered twenty thousand men to Stephen de la Perche, chancellor of the kingdom.<sup>107</sup> The figure may be exaggerated, and many may be Greeks rather than Lombards; but the number remains, in a general way, an impressive reminder of the process whereby Sicily was resettled and Latinized under the impetus of Roger's uncle and cousins.

The effectiveness of appeals for settlers to come

to Sicily is surely linked to the origins of the Aleramici themselves, in Liguria, and it was to Liguria that the Aleramici turned in search of eligible Latins; the personal ties between the Aleramici of Paternò and the Aleramici of Savona created a channel of communication, and that channel was kept open by the Genoese and Savonese merchants and shippers who presumably brought the immigrants southward. Moreover, the presence of loyal cultivators in eastern Sicily enhanced the revenues and resources of the one group, apart from the king himself, to hold extensive lands in Sicily.

It is in fact possible to point to some colonizing activity on Roger II's part. When George of Antioch conquered a line of African towns in the 1140s, he found them thinly populated and afflicted by famine. Many of their inhabitants had actually fled to Sicily. Roger II encouraged the fugitives to return, and there are hints that he also encouraged Christian settlement in his African possessions. The regular supply of grain to the famished towns also made them attractive to settlers from less fortunate cities. Roger certainly saw the African towns as a great potential source of income, and his attempts to generate economic recovery seem to have worked.<sup>108</sup> Ibn al-Athir describes the new florescence of Tripoli, when under Norman rule, from 1146 to 1158: "Then things went well in this city of Tripoli. The Sicilians and the Rûm frequented it [for the sake of commerce], with the result that it rapidly became repopulated and prospered."<sup>109</sup> A similar statement could just as well have been made about twelfth-century Sicily, under the impetus of the Hautevilles and the Aleramici.

## VI

It is evident that, under Roger II, royal interest in economic activity was more restricted than it was under Frederick II or Charles of Anjou. The foundation of new ports, the establishment of a royal merchant fleet, the state warehouses—these and other features of thirteenth-century fiscal policy are not visible in the Norman evidence.<sup>110</sup> It is clear, too, that the primary concern of the Normans, as of their successors, was to increase and maintain the revenue of the crown rather than to

<sup>101</sup> Garufi, "Gli Aleramici," 47–83; Cahen, *Le régime féodal* (*supra*, note 22) 38.

<sup>102</sup> Garufi, "Gli Aleramici," 75.

<sup>103</sup> Garufi, "Gli Aleramici," 76–79.

<sup>104</sup> Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 127; also 39, note 22.

<sup>105</sup> T. Fazello, *De rebus siculis decas prima*, ed. V. Amico (Catania 1749), 445–46; F. Aprile, *Della cronologia universale della Sicilia* (Palermo, 1725), 65; M. Amari, *Storia dei musulmani in Sicilia*, 2nd ed. a cura di C. A. Nallino, 3 vols. in 5 (Catania, 1933–39), III, 235–37.

<sup>106</sup> Hugo Falcandus, 73. Roger seems to reappear in Dalmatia, in Byzantine service: J. Ferluga, *Byzantium on the Balkans* (Amsterdam, 1976), 208–10, 420–21.

<sup>107</sup> Hugo Falcandus, 155.

<sup>108</sup> D. Abulafia, "L'attività commerciale genovese nell'Africa normanna: la città di Tripoli," *Atti del Congresso internazionale di Studi sulla Sicilia normanna* (Palermo, 1973), 395–402; Wieruszowski, *Politics and culture* (*supra*, note 31), 31–32.

<sup>109</sup> M. Amari, *Biblioteca arabo-sicula*, octavo ed. (Turin and Rome, 1880–81), I, 466 and 290.

<sup>110</sup> *Const. & Reg. Friderici*, 416–17 for new ports; Pryor, "Foreign policy," 46–68.

foster commerce and industry out of benign interest. The cautionary tale of the merchants of Amalfi provides ample confirmation that this was indeed the Norman attitude: the neglect of, even hostility to, Amalfitan trading interests by the overlords of Amalfi is strangely complemented by their concern to welcome Genoese and Venetian merchants into their kingdom. The Amalfitans resident in Bari were excluded from a royal amnesty for Bari in 1132.<sup>111</sup> Not that Apulian merchants, any more than Amalfitan, had a bright future under royal patronage: restive Bari was razed to the ground in 1155.<sup>112</sup> The ports of the kingdom were garrisoned, and the crown remained suspicious that their citizens wished to strive for communal liberties and an autonomous foreign policy. This attitude is perhaps best expressed by Frederick II who, writing in 1239, showed the disdain of a Roman optimate at vulgar commerce: "In our city of Salerno you have permitted to be elected as judge Mattheus Curialis, an illiterate, a merchant, someone quite unsuitable for the office of judge. . . . We do not wish the laws of

our subjects to be administered by any merchant, for the hands of merchants are swift to take advantage of bribes. . . ." <sup>113</sup>

In fact, it suited the Norman and Hohenstaufen kings very well to see their ports become the passive object of intensive penetration by foreign merchants. They wanted and encouraged lively markets, and in the thirteenth century gave vigorous patronage to fairs too. They saw the foreign merchants of Genoa, Venice, and the East as suppliants in search of the vital necessities Sicily and Apulia produced. And from the merchants' visits they drew an income which the twelfth-century rulers perhaps never, and the thirteenth-century rulers only gradually, redirected back into economic enterprises such as the encouragement of industry and the improvement of livestock. The purpose of the Norman rulers was to build a vast fleet, to maintain a large army, to resist their enemies, and to take what chances offered themselves for new conquests. Alongside all this they succeeded in other ambitions: to lead lives of luxury in magnificent palaces and parks, and to build the great churches in which they prayed and hoped to be buried. The Palatine Chapel, the Norman cathedrals are in fact the best documents there are to illustrate the wealth of the Norman kings and the ambitions which that wealth serviced.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Caspar, "Regesten," no. 77.

<sup>112</sup> *The itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, ed. M. N. Adler (London, 1907), 9, describes the desolate city.

<sup>113</sup> *Const. & Reg. Friderici*, 262; compare the thirteenth-century legislation which sought to ensure that government officials should not indulge in trade, in *Andr. Isern.*, 106; Andreas says: *Et hic habent quidam rubricam de illicito officialium commercio, quae continet ius comune, ut officiales ab hominibus iurisdictionis suae non recipiant mutuum, nec emant domos, vel alia quaecumque, nisi necessaria pro victu, nec ipsi, nec familiares.*

<sup>114</sup> I should like to express my thanks to Anna Sapir Abulafia, Rosalind Brown, John Pryor, and Ernst Kitzinger for their help in the preparation of this paper.